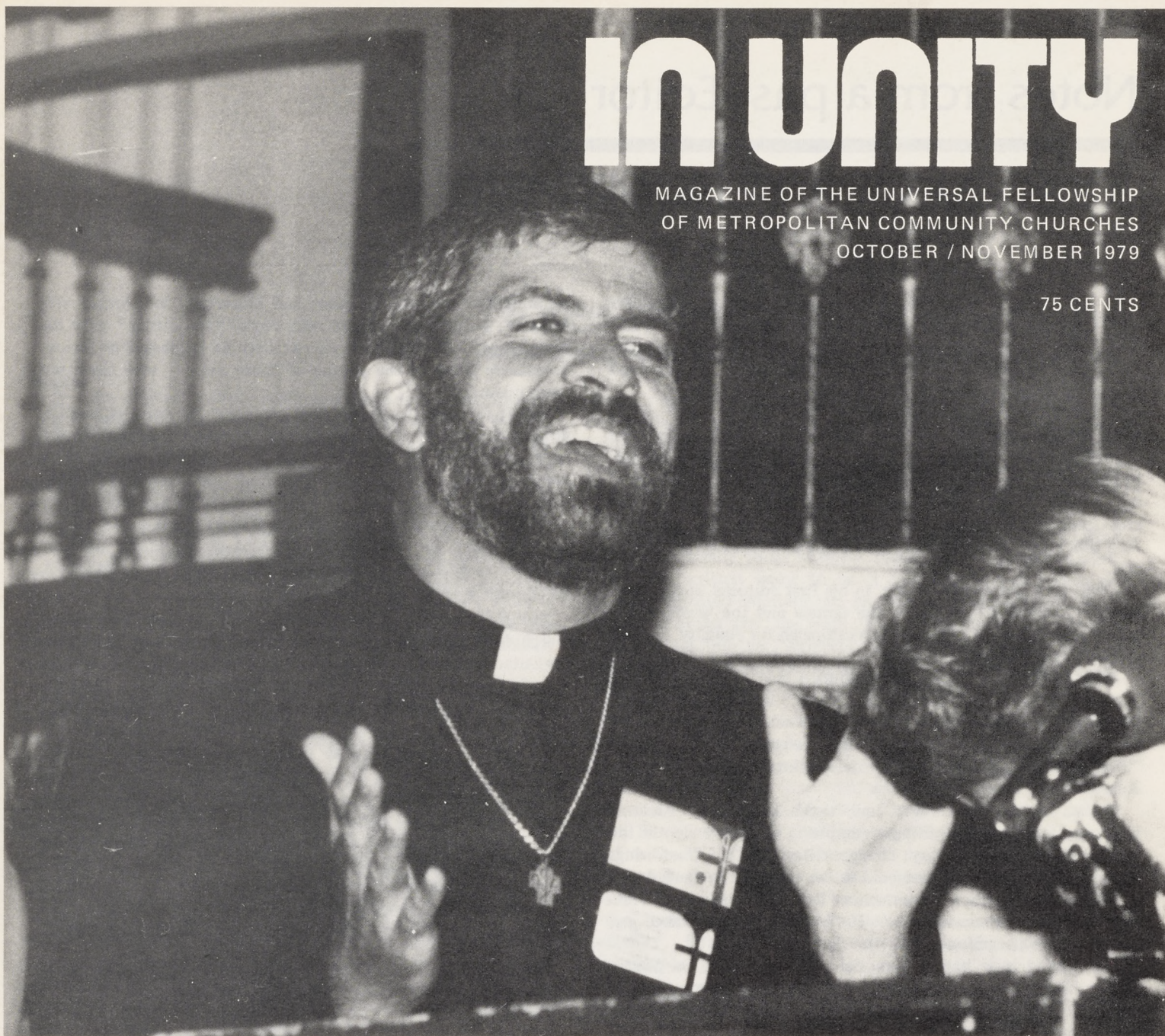


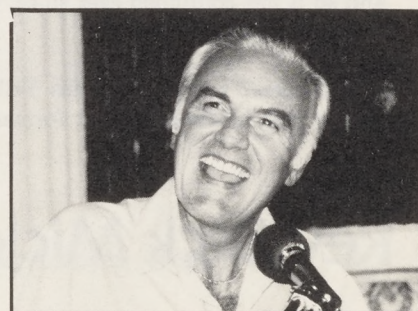
IN UNITY

MAGAZINE OF THE UNIVERSAL FELLOWSHIP
OF METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCHES
OCTOBER / NOVEMBER 1979

75 CENTS



IN THIS ISSUE: Ninth General Conference



Notes from a past Editor

JOURNAL OF A DENOMINATION

"Journal: a record of experiences, ideas or reflections kept regularly." For ten years, thank God, the MCC Journal has been kept. The branch of the Universal Fellowship involved with publications has provided us and future generations a "journal of the denomination."

In Unity has been the backbone of that journal. . . For several years I have thought it would be valuable to have an index of all articles and pieces published under the auspices of the Universal Fellowship. Time and space limitations prevent that from becoming a reality in this article, but it would indeed encompass a wide cross section of history, theology, opinion and, yes, nostalgia. And that's my problem: I start browsing and I lose myself in reverie.

I find Bob Ennis, first editor, in his first editorial seeing "two separate worlds: the world of the female and the world of the male," and declaring: "We are on a campaign for equality . . . Let's do our thing in unity."

Articles [in that first issue] included Rev. Perry's powerful "Letter from a Homosexual to the Church," which was later published in his autobiography. There was a scathing attack on the cult of physical beauty, "The Ugly Homosexual," by A. Craig and "The Easter Sermon" by then assistant pastor of MCC Los Angeles, John Hose.

In that same first issue was Rev. Perry's letter to the Alcoholic Beverage Control Board, filing a complaint about the sign in the window of Barney's Beanery: "Faggots Stay Out." . . . That brings back memories of those first bold sallies into the uncharted seas of *'this has got to stop!'* We remember that MCC was founded nine months before Stonewall and *In Unity* made its appearance just a few months after Stonewall.

The second issue had a memorial cover photo of Dr. Martin Luther King and a tribute to him written by Rev. Perry: "*He did not believe in separation . . . Many times in the press we are referred to as a church for homosexuals as though we believe in separation. We do not. We believe in the total integration of the homosexual into society as a human being . . . We are not the 'gay church.' We are the church of the living God!*"

In August 1970 the third issue presented the proposals that would be presented to the First General Conference in September . . . and subsequently became the first Bylaws, still the backbone of the UFMCC Bylaws today. That August issue listed six cities where MCC worship services were being held: Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Diego, Phoenix, Chicago and Miami. The next issue added Costa Mesa, Hawaii, Dallas. It was imperative that a denomination be formed at the General Conference in September. And so it has continued ever since, a journal which is a veritable saga of growth.

Who cares? I do. I love this Fellowship. I love its "roots." I love to read of the stuff that formed us and built the foundation

on which this Fellowship grew and blossomed to a world wide church. . . Certainly anyone who reads "our journal" with the nostalgia of a Fellowship lover can only be impressed by the indomitable spirit of the people of those years -- who made our years possible.

Call it Camelot if you will, but the torch has been handed on. More and more we see a new generation called to preach the full truth, to present the Body of Christ in a new way, a way that is consistent with the lifestyle of The Christ who saved an adulterous woman from being stoned to death, who defied the rules of the establishment in love and concern for women, sinners, tax collectors, foreigners, eunuchs, and people who do not marry and have children. . . MCC was called into being to show forth this Christ, the authentic Christ of the Gospels.

So MCC marches through history -- ten years of growth and search for authenticity. . . In our chronicals we have sometimes presented ourselves to the world with the appearance of being more the children of humanity than the children of God. This has sometimes been a stumbling block for a world which has not fully accepted a theology of a Christ fully divine and fully human.

Growth was spurred by an article in *Time* magazine October 1970 (also re-printed in *In Unity*). Calls, letters, visitors from all over the United States began insisting, "We want an MCC here, too!" *In Unity* had already chronicled an abortive attempt to start a mission in Orange County, California which failed because ongoing leadership was not available. Caution became the watchword. In February the Board of Directors of MCC L.A. appointed a four member committee (Perry, Hose, Ploen, Loynes) to draw up Bylaws for strengthening the denomination that was inevitable...

The details are precious as the years slip by. Thank God for *In Unity* and far-sighted editors; the journal was kept. . .

Already in 1971 *The Gay Christian* had made its appearance in the Northeastern United States. The learned and capable Rev. Roy Birchard was its first editor, a service he continued until the Rev. Howard Wells took over the job in 1975 while he was completing his Masters of Divinity at Union Theological Seminary. He was followed as editor by the Rev. Jay Deacon, M. Div., and by action of the General Conference, *The Gay Christian* became a Fellowship publication for the expression of individual theological opinion. In 1976, Rev. Deacon and myself worked out an arrangement to publish both magazines within one cover. Thus *In Unity* became the news and opinion journal of the Universal Fellowship.

In these pages. . . indeed we have a "journal of a denomination." I, for one, hope never to see the ink dry on this ongoing journal -- this vital link with each other here and now, this link with our roots, a lifegiving transfusion of love from the past, which, even now, we pass on to the future. . . ■

Rev. Dick Mickley

Notes from an Interim Editor

This issue of *In Unity* celebrates the people we are: diverse, striving, jubilant, and, above all, we are survivors. We have in common the drama of being placed in a time and a society that would keep us oppressed and instead we celebrate freedom with each other. As well as being an important decision-making time, General Conference IX was just such a celebration. "Feedback" responses from our people, printed in the *Conference* section (beginning page 9) reflect how UFMCC has helped make lives more joyful, integrated and purposeful. Articles like Rev. Jean White's *Portrait of an Elder* (page 24) and many items in Fellowship Family of this issue also remind us that the struggle continues, that persecution and freedom are perpetually paired on the family crest of any people of God.

Being committed to the work of the Commission on the Laity in this Fellowship, I strongly feel our people embody a special quality in MCC -- as in the early church, as in any church, the people represent *diversity in unity*. There is tremendous life in that diversity. It is any family's life-energy, but most especially our own. When we do not reflect that diversity, be it in our magazines or General Conferences, we are in trouble.

The recent furor over *The Gay Christian* is not so much an attempt to narrow the spectrum of our diverse points of view as it actually evinces that our spectrum has not been wide enough. Perhaps if both conservative and liberal views had a more equal footing, that is if the Fellowship publication more energetically reflected the Fellowship's diversity, one side might not have found itself at the throat of the other. Meanwhile, what *Gay Christian* is and has always meant to be has been almost entirely obscured.

The Gay Christian is like a scout sent out ahead. A scout must risk itself to find a sure path that others will later follow. *TGC* has come under attack within the United States for the questionable

sureness of its path. In part I believe this is due to our regional differences in approaching *what's in print*. In the Northeast and other educationally-oriented regions (from which *TGC* originates and has its strongest following), the printed word is not sacred; it is a participation sport. The reader is expected to get involved with it, wrestle and weigh it, agree with it or rant against it -- but working to eliminate it is not considered a viable option. Other regions, especially those strongly evangelical or fundamentalist, prefer the written word to be a culmination rather than an exercise; it should communicate the tried-and-true, the acceptable -- in some broad way, the truth. To not accomplish this is to fall short and not "deserve," in effect, to be in print. Messages regularly appearing in boxes cautioning that the opinions expressed are not "official", much less certifiedly true, do not help.

We shouldn't forget that within all of Christianity UFMCC is itself a scout. We have made an audacious decision to bring Christian principles down an unbeaten track. For this we are thought foolish at best, blasphemous at worst and are blessedly invisible to those who would think either one if they could even imagine us able to exist. But our unbeaten path has also freed us of convention and sped us ahead. For years we have been dealing with issues that are just now beginning to gnaw at the edges of mainstream religion, issues like inclusive language, homosexuality and the Bible and the entire, traditionally "religious" view of women, more than half of humanity. For people we once baffled and outraged, we are now sources of insight.

Scouts are, by nature, disturbers, prodders, revelators, light-casters. One way or another, *The Gay Christian* will survive.

And this is also why the Universal Fellowship not only continues to survive, but also to bring energy and hope and meaning into all the lives it touches. And *that* is worth celebrating! ■

Jean Gralley



IN UNITY

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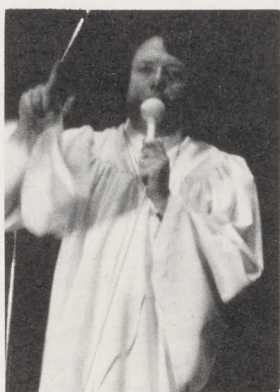
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CANADA

MCC Toronto hosted a "Festival of Love" September 28-30th in which the Reverend Elders Troy Perry and Freda Smith participated. The weekend included a dance, banquet, two worship services and workshops. Revs. Perry and Smith each conducted workshops and answered questions about the Fellowship at an informal discussion period.

MCC Toronto is the "Mother Church" of Canada in that 75 percent of Canada's ministers have come from it. It is currently involved in a drive to raise funds for a new sanctuary and community center.

ENGLAND

MCC Birmingham, England, is looking for a permanent church home. They have been slowly filling a huge glass bottle with change for the Building Fund. At a special celebration of the 5th anniversary of Birmingham's first MCC service, the collected change will be ceremoniously counted.

MID CENTRAL

MCC Illiano, Illinois celebrated its fourth anniversary September 8th and 9th with a banquet and special worship services. Fittingly, the Rev. Elder Charlie Arehart was invited to attend. It was Rev. Arehart who, as district coordinator four year ago, granted Illiano "Study Group" status

and appointed Reid Christensen worship coordinator. This past anniversary weekend, the recently re-elected Elder Arehart returned to consecrate at the special services and officially recognize the Rev. Christensen as a licensed UFMCC minister.

NORTHWEST

MCC Hawaii suffered a set-back recently when fire ripped through the building in which their offices are located. The cause of the blaze in the 81-year-old structure was apparently spontaneous combustion. Rela-

tively little damage resulted. Important files, office equipment and the piano were undamaged.

During the clean-up operations a telephone repairperson overheard conversation among the MCC people and became inquisitive. The following week he returned to attend a worship service and a potluck.

The office has re-located temporarily until permanent quarters can be secured.

• • •

Rev. Bob Waldrop, pastor of MCC Salt Lake City, was working late at the church office recently when he noticed the flickering of fire through the window. Racing



The New Freedom Evangelistic Team can be reached at POB 371, Galena Park, TX 77547

outside, he found rubbish and his car ablaze and a fire set on the back porch. Fire engines did not arrive in time to save the car, which was a complete loss, but were able to halt the blaze that would have soon swept through the building. Neighborhood hoodlums are suspected of setting the fires. In recent months, MCC Salt Lake City, situated in the heart of the homophobic Mormon Church, has been pelted with tomatoes, had its doors broken down and received several threats against its pastor.

• • •

MCC San Jose had worked hard for the anti-discrimination ordinance and was out in force the day this past August when it came before the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors for a vote. Over 1,000 fundamentalists, led by nationally known Kenny Foreman, were also in the chambers that day to oppose the ordinance. Just as the final reading was completed and voting was about to begin, an earthquake rumbled and shook Northern California, causing much commotion in the Santa Clara chambers. "There are no accidents!" yelled one of the fundamentalists from the overflow crowd. "The earthquake is God's hand telling you to vote against this ordinance!" "Praise the Lord!" the crowd responded.

When order was restored, the County Supervisors went on to pass the ordinance 4 to 1.

• • •

October 27th will mark the first broadcast of MCC San Francisco's twenty minute radio program, *Just As I Am*. This precedent-setting program will air weekly on San Francisco's 50,000 watt religious station KFAX which reaches a listening audience of 7 million. This is the first time a religious station has accepted programming from any gay group. *Just As I Am*, which is guaranteed a one-year contract, will feature sermons, interviews, special music and promotional information about UFMCC.

Contributions to help support this historic radio ministry are welcome.

• • •

Before Bob Hope was to tape his Memorial Day TV special on board an aircraft carrier, the Navy was ready to cancel it when they discovered that one of the featured acts was the Village People. Hope quipped, "Tell the Navy not to worry: they're not going to stay the night."

NORTHEAST

The Worcester County Ecumenical Council has refused membership to MCC Worcester. According to Rev. Shelley Hamilton, former pastor and currently Northeast District coordinator, the council said the issue was not homosexuality but rather the question of whether MCC conformed to the guidelines defining a church.

MCC Boston has also been refused membership by the Massachusetts Council of

Churches while the Rhode Island Council of Churches has accepted the application from MCC Providence.

• • •

In a precedent-setting case, the Rev. Jon Kuiper, pastor of Good News MCC in Albany, New York, was awarded permanent custody of his 13-year-old adopted son. After Rev. Kuiper came out several months ago, his previous adoption of Alden was challenged in the courts. The Catskill, N.Y.

FELLOWSHIP FLASHES

MINISTERIAL CHANGES: *Rev. Don Johnson* from minister-in-residence at Tampa, Florida to pastor, MCC Sydney (Australia). . . *Reverends Larry Gauer and Bob Wolf*, co-pastors of MCC Vancouver to pastors, MCC Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. . . *Rev. David Gunton* pastor, MCC Edmonton Alberta(Canada) to pastor, MCC Vancouver B.C. (Canada). . . *Rev. Phil Speranza*, pastor, MCC Ottawa, Ontario (Canada) to pastor, MCC Edmonton, Alberta (Canada). . . *Rev. Gary Wilson*, pastor, MCC Anchorage to assistant pastor MCC Seattle. . . *Rev. Steve Quesnel*, worship coordinator, MCC Fresno, to assistant pastor, MCC Nashville, Tenn. . . *Rev. Flo Fleishman* from MCC Fresno to pastor, MCC Oceanside . . *Rev. C. Jane Carl* was elected pastor of MCC Pomona. . *Rev. Sherman "Bill" Dearth* formerly on staff, MCC Sacramento, is the new worship coordinator of MCC Salem, Oregon. . . *Rev. Roger Webb*, newly licensed, is the worshipcoordinator of MCC Santa Barbara. . *Rev. Marge Ragona*, former pastor MCC Providence is the new interim pastor of MCC Ventura, California. . *Rev. Jo Ann Monti*, formerly of Montreal is the new interim pastor of MCC Boulder, Colorado . . *Rev. A. Stephen Pieters*, newly licensed, is now the pastor of MCC Hartford, CT. . . *Rev. Chet Jones* is the new worship coordinator of MCC New Haven, CT. . *Rev. Charles K. Steele* is the new worship coordinator of MCC Ft. Wayne, Ind. . . *Rev. John Ayres* is the new worship coordinator of MCC Indianapolis, Ind. . . *Rev. Marshall Williams* is the new pastor of MCC Minneapolis, Minn. . . *Rev. Jan Johnson*, newly licensed, is the new assistant pastor of MCC Kansas City, Mo. . . *Rev. Frank Crouch*, formerly pastor of MCC Pomona, Ca. is the pastor-elect of MCC Philadelphia. *Rev. Jose Mojica*, founder and former pastor of MCC Hispana, has moved to Los Angeles to become the Church Extension Officer of The Hispanic Americas. . *Rev. Shelley Hamilton*, former pastor of MCC Worcester, Ma., has moved to New York City to attend Union Theological Seminary and continue as District Coordinator of the Northeast District. . *Rev. Valerie Bouchard* is the new pastor of MCC Milwaukee, Wisc. . . *Rev. Don Borbe*, former pastor of MCC Philadelphia, is the new pastor of MCC Portland, Oregon. . *Rev. Nancy Radcliffe*, formerly worship coordinator of MCC Princeton, NJ. is now the interim pastor of MCC Columbia, S.C. . . *Rev. Joan Wakeford*, formerly of Durban, South Africa, is now the new assistant pastor of MCC Dallas, Texas. . *Rev. Rick Weatherly*, former worship coordinator of MCC Tidewater, Fla. has moved to San Francisco to attend Pacific School of Religion. . *Rev. Pepper Shields*, newly licensed, is the new registrar of Samaritan Theological Institute. *Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson*, former pastor, MCC Detroit, is now full time at the Fellowship offices as Clerk and Resident Elder. . *Rev. Jean Hart*, newly licensed, is the assistant pastor of MCC in the Valley, North Hollywood. . . **OTHER FLASHES** MCC Toronto is collecting funds to assist the Boat People. Checks are welcome, made out to MCC Toronto Boat People Fund (c/o the church at 29 Granby St., Toronto M5B, Canada). Donations of clothing and transportation, accomodation or translation services are being sought. . . The weekend of Sept. 7th MCC Sacramento celebrated its eighth anniversary with a banquet attended by Rev. Troy Perry and Mayor Phillip Isenberg . . *The New Freedom Evangelistic Team* will participate in the Southeast district conference hosted by MCC Sarasota, Florida. . . MCC Melbourne will host the 1980 conference of the Australasia. . .

judge's decision to permit Rev. Kuiper to retain custody followed months of psychological testing by the state of both the father and son, along with reports from the boy's school and social worker.

This case has brought Rev. Kuiper much national notoriety, including interviews in major newspapers, *People* magazine and the *Phil Donahue Show*. In all cases Reverend Kuiper has spoken out about the important ministry of MCC.

The Dutch Reformed Church de-frocked Rev. Kuiper after he came out of the closet last January, maintaining his sexuality and ministry with UFMCC was "doctrinally unacceptable." In a symbolic move, Rev. Kuiper appealed that decision to a higher judiciary. Just this week, the Particular Synod of Albany, one of six major judiciaries in the Dutch Reformed Church, reprimanded the lower court for its procedural "irregularity" in its decision and is considering throwing the case against Rev. Kuiper out of court. The higher judiciary also overturned the previous assessment of UFMCC, stating its doctrine is fully and clearly acceptable.

• • •

MCC Worcester has just announced establishing a gay radio program one half hour a week. It will be presented during WCUW-FM's evening magazine format.

WCUW is owned and operated by an independent, educational foundation dedicated to the exploration and improvement of the radio medium in the Worcester area.

MCC Worcester's program began airing in October. Assistance in developing programming is invited.

AUSTRALIA

Twenty-nine members and friends of MCC Sydney welcomed the Rev. Doug Johnson and Mark Lee to Australia August 21st. Rev. Johnson, formerly pastor of MCC Tampa, Florida flew from the General Conference site in Los Angeles to become the new pastor of Sydney. A church dinner was held to celebrate the new arrivals as well as mark the fourth anniversary of MCC Sydney.

NEW ZEALAND

At the October Elders' meeting New Zealand was recognized as its own Extension Area. The area formerly known as Australasia is now composed of the District of Australia and the New Zealand Extension Area.

SOUTHEAST

One evening in late September, the Rev. Art Fleschner, assistant district coordinator and worship coordinator of MCC Orlando, Florida, was attacked and badly beaten. Rev. Fleschner had just left the Parliament House, a gay establishment in Orlando, when he was jumped by three young men heard to yell, "There goes a faggot!" He was struck by a block of wood in the small of his back and beaten about the head with a two-by-four. When a black man ran to Rev. Fleschner's assistance, the assailants fled, leaving him partially paralyzed with a swollen eye and multiple bruises. Doctors at first feared permanent damage, including bone damage to the inner ear; however, Rev. Fleschner is "out of the woods" now and expected to completely recover from his injuries.

MID-CENTRAL

Notes from Minneapolis:

It was held the weekend of September 14th. Before the church had even let their new pastor unpack, 12 members of MCC Minneapolis whisked Rev. Marshall Williams off to a 'summer cottage' in the farming country of Wisconsin. The five room A-frame was the homebase for their spiritual retreat for the next three days. In order to not only get in touch with the beauty of the area, but in touch with the Christ within each, they participated in "spending an hour with Jesus." This meditation usually done during Lent is based upon the idea that the disciples kept falling asleep when they were in the garden with Jesus. Saturday the morning communion service by the side of the pool included reading the Gospel of Mark 14:32-42, and a selection from Conversational Prayer about the fact that God

is always "here." Then following communion everyone had their own time to think, to pray or meditate - but in total silence. Even those who were to prepare lunch could communicate only briefly and in whispers. During the lunch there were readings from a number of sources. After lunch everyone was again free to roam the countryside, returning at 3 pm for a sharing time. All who had maintained the silence benefitted from seeking God within. The evening's activities included a roaring fire and Rev. Lucia Chappelle's Wednesday service from General Conference. The Sunday mid-morning communion and lunch ended the day. It was an interesting introduction to a new church for a new pastor and a good spirit-filled weekend in the country by all the members who participated.



Members of MCC Minneapolis who participated in the 3-day retreat at Centerville, Wisc.

ELDERS' MINUTES

are now available through Subscription

In accordance with a resolution passed at General Conference, the minutes of Elders' meetings will now be provided to individuals or churches by the Fellowship Offices at a yearly subscription rate of \$7.50 (\$4.00 for any single set). We will bill only churches; individuals are requested to please remit a check or money order made out to UFMCC with their subscription order.

To begin this year's series of minutes (October '79 to October '80), please send your name, address, and check or money order to:

MINUTES/UFMCC Clerk
5300 Santa Monica Blvd., Suite 304
Los Angeles, California 90029



William Tom



August 13th to August 19th the UFMCC celebrated its Ninth General Conference in Los Angeles, California. In Unity is grateful to Rob Long of Toronto, Canada who is responsible for all the wonderful photographs of this section, excepting those labelled otherwise. Immediately following is a General Conference Update from the Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson, Clerk of the Board of Elders:

Among other things, General Conference is a time of change and decision-making. I am going to attempt to summarize the changes that were recorded or effected by General Conference IX, in Los Angeles. This list is by no means complete, but it is substantial!

Statistically speaking, General Conference IX reported 135 MCC congregations worldwide, including 6 in the United Kingdom, and 6 in Nigeria! In addition, we now have 66 ordained clergy, 84 clergy who were relicensed, and 22 who were newly licensed, for a total of 172 U.F.M.C.C. clergy.

General Conference passed 11 changes in the Fellowship By-laws. Most of the changes were minor, with the exception of the new composition of the Board of Home Missions (Article V.C.3) which now includes "all persons serving as pastors, interim-pastors, and worship coordinators of chartered churches, missions and study-groups." Also, the quorum for General Conference was changed from 80% to 66%.

This year the Board of Elders presented a major new proposal, a "ten-year plan" for the Fellowship. The acceptance of this paper by Conference initiated many changes, beginning with a major overhaul of the structures of the Commission on Government, Structures and Systems. That Commission now includes the chair (Rev. Don Eastman, appointed by the Board of Elders), the assistant chair (the chair of the Commission on the Laity), lay members (the elected District Lay Representatives or appointed Lay Representatives in Church Extension areas), clergy members (district coordinators or Church

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PHOTOS (top to bottom): MCC-L.A.'s Gospel Choir Director Jimmi Irving; Saturday evening's special ordination service - MCC's newly ordained ministers (l to r: Rev.s Bob Darst, Sky Anderson, Dusty Pruitt, Rob Shivers, Karen Zeigler, Marge Ragona, Claudia Vierra); Singer Jo Crisco of Houston, Texas; UFMCC's two new Elders, Rev. Jean White of MCC London, England and Rev. Jeri Ann Harvey of MCC Los Angeles, California.

CONVINCING?



William Tom

It was the first time I had ever been frisked on the way into a Sunday morning worship service. "Why?" I asked the guard, who told me that the pastor regularly receives telephone threats against his life. It was also the first time I had ever witnessed so much gratitude for grace, so much sheer delight in being Christian. As soon as the piano and organ started, the vast congregation began to clap reverently, rhythmically, joyfully.

The day was August 19, 1979. The place: a ballroom seating three thousand people in a Los Angeles hotel. The occasion: the Ninth General Conference of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches. The preacher whose life is always under threat is Troy Perry, founder of UFMCC and author of *The Lord Is My Shepherd and He Knows I'm Gay*.

Throughout the entire service, any statement of solidarity with Hispanics or the elderly or the poor or any other oppressed group was greeted with strong applause. These people know in their own pulses, I realized, that an attack on the freedom and dignity of anyone is an attack on everyone!

The sermon was the good old-fashioned gospel kind, urging the acceptance of redemption, and faith in God's unconditional love. The only difference was that in this church, gay people were free to attend openly, without one plea except that Christ had died for them. And they came -- several thousand strong -- to take communion and to affirm their oneness in Christ Jesus.

The songs were the old gospel ones familiar to most Christians, especially to evangelicals: "He Lives," "Blessed Assurance," "Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee," -- all sung with tremendous exuberance. I noticed a large section of deaf people, who were able to sing in their hearts because the words were being signed to them by a corps of enthusiastic men and women. (There must be deaf people who'd like to attend many other congregations. Why is it that in all my travels, the only two times I've seen sign language translation have been in gay Christian congregations? Do people have to be oppressed themselves before they make provisions for other deprived persons?)

Together we sang the Lord's Prayer -- and how fervently it was sung, with ten or 15 people translating into sign language, their hands and bodies full of the same yearning after God that I could

hear in the voices all around me. No sooner had we finished lifting ourselves toward the Lord than Troy Perry quietly asked us to check under our chairs for any strange packages. The hotel had received a bomb threat. "But we will continue worship as usual," he announced; and again the audience broke into happy applause.

It was enough to make any Christian think some long and sober thoughts. This was the most grateful celebration of Christ I had ever attended, yet it was threatened by hatred on every hand. During the sermon, Perry mentioned that in 1973 four MCC church buildings had been destroyed by arson -- in Los Angeles first, then in Nashville, San Francisco and finally in New Orleans. So cunningly was the New Orleans fire set that 30 people, including the pastor, lost their lives. A city official joked at the time that there would be no problem about what to do with the bodies: "We can just put them in fruit jars."

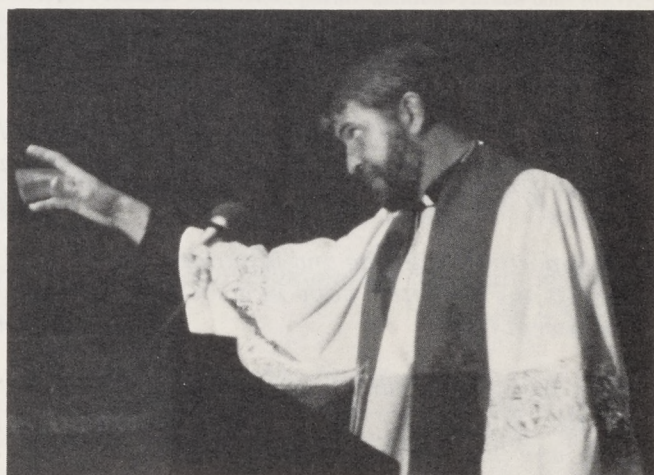
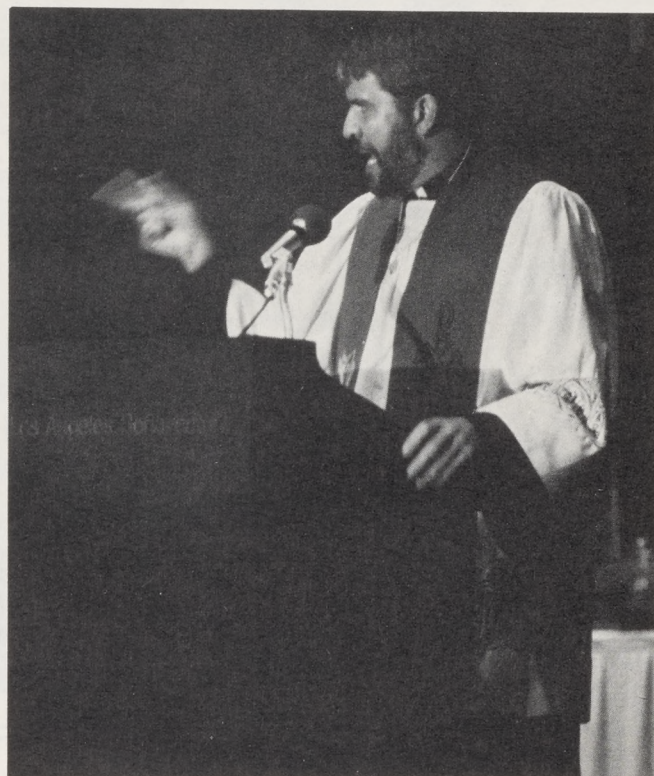
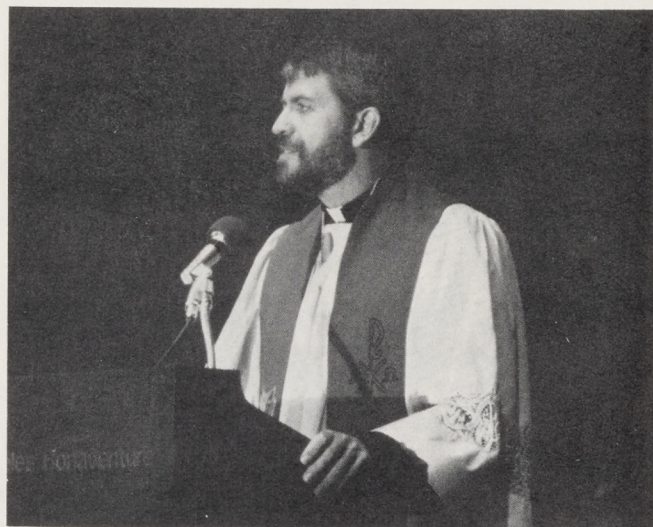
On the very heels of recounting this calamitous history, Troy Perry cried out, "But we *praise the Lord* that through all this we have been drawn closer to Christ and to each other" -- and again, that celebrative applause! ("We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed . . . persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed . . .").

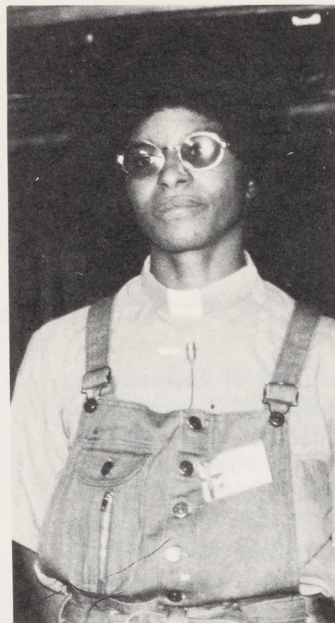
When the new elders were installed . . . the entire congregation was invited to reach towards the altar to share in the blessing. I did so and was surprised to feel the palms of my hands growing warm, even hot, with the spiritual energy in that place. (Why was I surprised? Don't Christians really believe in the presence of God in our midst? Could that be why so many of us are powerless?)

Years ago I was told that if I wanted to see what the Holy Spirit is doing among gay Christians, I ought to visit the Metropolitan Community Church in Los Angeles. For one reason or another (homophobia, perhaps?) I never bothered to do it. Now at last I have experienced what it is like to worship the Lord among a persecuted people, and I have seen the Spirit in action there.

What grace will break forth among us all when we stop building walls of hostility between ourselves and other people who are loved by the Holy Spirit!

— by Virginia Mollenkott for *Christian Century*
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CLOCKWISE: The San Diego choir performing in the Saturday evening ordination service; (Above) Rev. John Gill, MCC Ft Lauderdale, Florida; Adam DeBaugh, UFMCC Social Action Director, Rev. Lucia Chappelle, All Saints MCC, Hollywood; Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson, L.A.; (Next page) Elders and newly-ordained clergy

greet Rev. Zeigler after her ordination; Rev. Elder Freda Smith and friend; Rosalind Rinker with Rev. Troy Perry; Actor Ed Asner addressing Sunday morning's congregation; Rev. Perry greets San Francisco supervisor Harry Britt, recently appointed to finish the term of the late Harvey Milk.



Feedback

At the final Sunday morning worship, this Editor circulated a questionnaire which asked, "After experiencing this Conference, how would you describe what the Universal Fellowship means to you?" The following responses were among the hundreds received:

It means a great deal more to me after this week. I feel a great deal closer to the Fellowship and more in tune with myself as a result.

MCC-Hartford

A supporting, uplifting and inspiring force in my life that enables me to better cope in a society that overall does not accept (me).

MCC-East Bay

Everything! This church gives meaning and direction to my life. As a specific result of this conference - the people here and the spirituality expressed here - I like myself better.

San Francisco

I want to give my time to it. It gave me something positive. I'm accepted for what I am. God is the center of my life even if I am gay.

Detroit

Trying not to sound ecstatic, I would say that I have been reinforced and re-charged in my faith, and second, that I have seen the vision of a universal fellowship. In fact I now know what Christian community is.

Melbourne, Australia

Impossible to do - How do you describe love in words?

Mid-Central

Family.

Mid-Atlantic

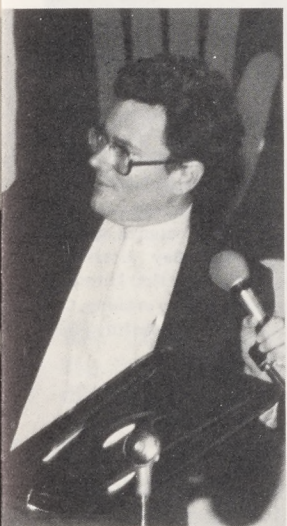
Family - people of God - love in action.

East Bay

continued from pg.9 Extension Officers), and Members-at-Large (qualified persons appointed by the Board of Elders). Referred to the new Commission were all the By-laws proposals (9-22) concerning lay and professional Ministry in the UFMCC, which they are to bring to General Conference in 1981 (these will comprise a special addendum section at the end of the forthcoming General Conference IX Reports and Directives). They have a big job ahead of them!

The ten year plan also included projected goals in education and evangelism. One method of education and evangelism is entitled "Project Samaria," an attempt to reach into new areas and "target communities." This innovative project is still in the process of formation. You will be hearing more about it after the October Elder's meeting.

As of General Conference IX, the Washington Field Office has been assigned major responsibility, under the direction of the Elders, for our *continued page 31*



A family - where one sees hopefully where one wants to go and also sees the mistakes and problems one doesn't want to make and learn from them. Hopefully an opening up to God's work for us as disciples, not members and followers.
Princeton, New Jersey

The church is scattered, lacking in uniformity. Great Lakes
We are a family. Like any family, we are different and diverse. Although we may do things differently, the overall unity in Christ is still there.
MCC-Vancouver

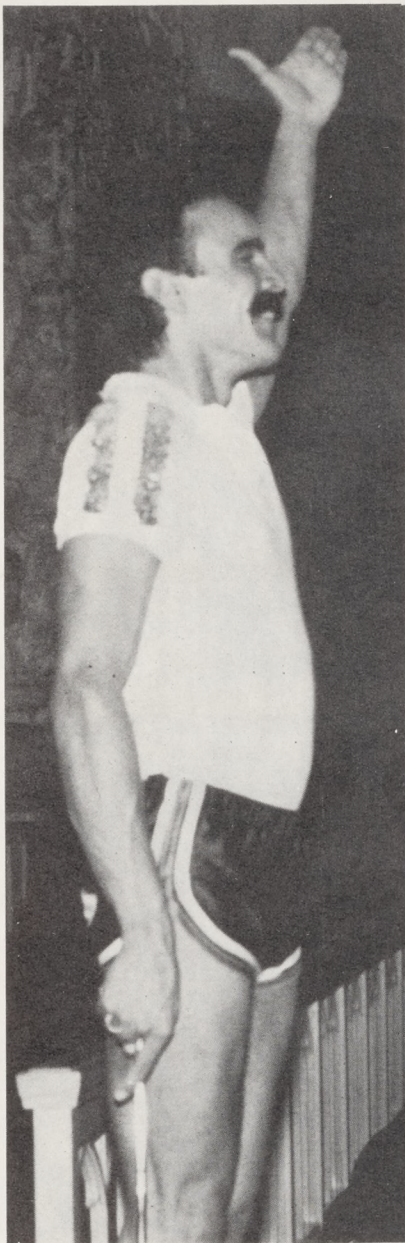
Diversity - we come from a variety of backgrounds. We approach things differently. Part of the uniqueness of UFMCC is working through these differences. It isn't always easy, but it is rewarding.
MCC-Detroit

One thing I discovered at the Conference is the great diversity within our Fellowship. And yet even the people I personally disagree with, theologically, I can see the spirit moving throughout the Fellowship.
Worcester

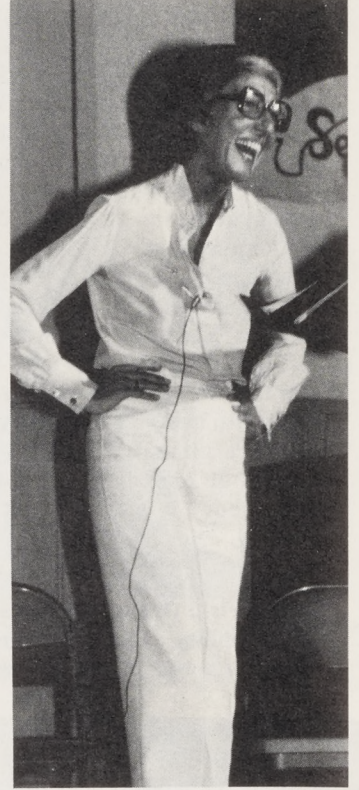
It is the foundation for the largest Ecumenical Christian Church.
MCC-Ft. Lauderdale

Being able to live in a homophobic corporate world and be strong.
MCC-Chicago

The Fellowship means many things - it means Gay people worshiping together - Gay people binding together in an effort to communicate not only with each other but with the world.
Christ the King MCC



Steve Warren



CLOCKWISE. The Great American Yankee Freedom Band which performed Saturday afternoon the 18th at MCC-L.A.; one of the Band's great American star-spangled entertainers; the antics of Midge Costanza, special guest speaker Saturday afternoon and recipient of MCC's first Humanitarian Award; that same evening, the Reverend Jim Dykes (pastor, MCC San Francisco) and son.

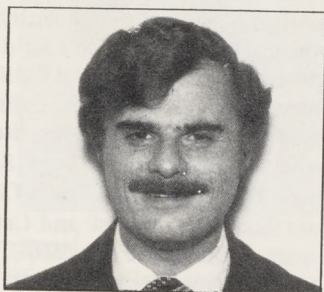
I've seen also a lot of people I didn't think I would see again.
MCC-Long Beach

The society of those who have survived (thus far).
MCC-St. Louis

A beautiful feeling which renews my hope. A strong, proud, growing fellowship.
Kansas City

This fellowship is absolutely beautiful. I praise and thank God for MCC. MCC was responsible for helping me become the human being that God wants me to be. I love you MCC.
San Francisco





REV. P. THOMAS JORDAN (32)

The Rev. P. Thomas Jordan is the Administrative Staff Minister at MCC of the Rockies, Denver, Colorado and is in charge of the exhorter program there. He has attended the University of Maryland and Holyoke College, Holyoke, Massachusetts and completed all of the correspondence courses from Samaritan. Before becoming a MCC minister, Jordan was a marketing consultant for Bell System and prior to that he spent eight years in the Air Force. He believes we are all ministers. "I feel the laity needs to accept their responsibility as ministers in the community in order for the Word to reach all persons," he said.

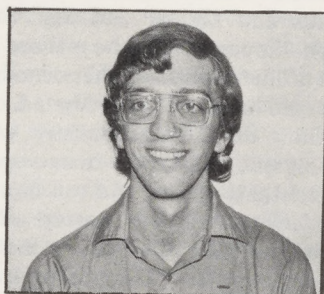
REV. JAMES LEWEY (48)

The Rev. James Lewey is the senior pastor of MCC San Antonio, Texas and is also a board member of the Forward Foundation and The Texas Gay Task Force. Formerly a bookkeeper, Lewey has attended Forrest Park Community College in St. Louis, Missouri, Forrest Valley Community College and Chrisitan International University. He has also taken correspondence courses from Samaritan Theological Institute. A Pentecostal, he believes that a pastor cannot carry the Gospel message alone. "The laity is there to be ministered to and in turn minister to others in various capacities," he said. Lewey was an exhorter in St. Louis and while there instituted a prison ministry program and was acting chaplain for Bernard State Prison.

REV. CAROLE ANGELA NEEDHAM (34)

Rev. Needham felt called at the age of seven. Being raised a Methodist, however, she realized her denomination would not accept

women into the professional ministry; subsequently she converted to Catholicism and aspired to enter the convent. Her homosexuality eventually closed this avenue of ministry within the Catholic church as her sex had with the Methodists. "UFMCC has enabled me," she says, "to fulfill a life long call as a gay and as a female." She perceives the task of the Fellowship to "spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ to ALL people, especially those who have been excluded from the family of God: gay people, transvestites, transsexuals, feminists and all those who believe that Christianity is about supporting the state and so see faith as an agent of oppression and not of freedom." A former medical librarian and researcher, Reverend Needham is currently worship coordinator of the MCC in Newcastle, England.



REV. A. STEPHEN PIETERS (27)

The Rev. A. Stephen Pieters believes the main purpose of the Fellowship is to spread the Good News of God's love in Christ Jesus to all people. "This calls for breaking down the barriers of prejudice, the barriers of cultural, racial, affectional and gender differentiations and learning to relate to one another as children of God," he said. Rev. Pieters is pastor of MCC Hartford, Connecticut where is he also a member of the Capitol Region Conference of Churches, serves on the Hartford Human Rights Coalition and is a member of the Gay and Alternative Lifestyle Counseling Service. Before going to MCC Hartford, Pieters was an exhorter at Good Shepherd Parish MCC in Chicago. His previous involvement as an actor and singer continued at Good Shepherd Parish where he was active in the musical life of the church and the drama group. Pieters believes that the Professional mini-

OUR new mcc clergy

*Nineteen of this year's
newly-licensed clergy respond
to In Unity about their calling,
background, and perspective on the
laity.*

sters cannot be the church by themselves. "The clergy might have certain gifts, knowledge or experience, but the clergy in my mind should serve as facilitators, who serve the laity as we all become the people of God together." He said that he thinks the future of the Fellowship is going to rely heavily on the gifts and the commitments of the laity. Rev. Pieters has his B.S. from Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois and his Master's of Divinity from McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago.



REV. A. RICHARD WEATHERLY (26)
The Rev. A. Richard Weatherly has a B.S. in Religion from the George Washington University in Washington D.C. and is working on a Master's of Divinity at the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, California. He was an exhorter in MCC D.C., staff exhorter in MCC Richmond, Virginia and worship coordinator in Tidewater-Norfolk, Virginia. He believes there is but one Body of Christ. "Clergy and laity are not essentially different kinds of Christians. Some members of the Body are called to special tasks like the professional ministry but that grants them no special nature or superiority. The laity are ministers as well," he said.

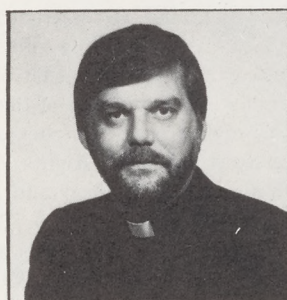


REV. JANINE M. JOHNSON, (24)
The Rev. Janine M. Johnson has felt a call to the ministry since high school. "It wasn't until I found MCC that I felt a church was at least striving to carry out the Gospel message," she explained. Rev. Johnson will

be the new assistant pastor of the MCC in Kansas City, Mo. She has been co-worship coordinator of MCC Ft. Wayne, Ind. and on staff at All Saints MCC while attending Samaritan Theological Institute in Los Angeles.



REV. ROBERT COPESTAKE (25)
The Rev. Robert H. Copestake has a B.S. from the University of Maryland, a Master's of Theology from Perkins School of Theology and has completed a Pastoral Education Program at Parkland Memorial Hospital where he was also chaplain. He is presently associate pastor at MCC Dallas, Texas and works with the Dallas Gay Political Caucus, Affirmation and Lesbian and Gay Voices for Action. Copestake said he realized that if he had affiliated with another denomination he would have had to be closeted. "Instead, I chose the UFMCC ministry, where I can be myself, and can be free to openly love my lifetime partner and can most effectively facilitate Christ's message of liberation to all people. He believes that the laity are also priests. "We are all members of the priesthood of all believers. The laity is called to share God's words of love and acceptance and affirmation with others, as is the clergy," he said.



REV. GARY R. LEWIS (35)
The Rev. Gary R. Lewis, who is the assistant pastor at Christ Chapel MCC, Santa Ana, California, was called to be a minister

because as he says, "God wouldn't allow me to do anything else and still maintain the knowledge that I was following God's will. Every time I strayed from the path leading to the ministry it was made abundantly clear that it was not pleasing in God's sight." He is a registered nurse and attended California State University in Long Beach, California and earned a B.A. in Religious Studies. He has also attended St. Anthony School of Nursing. Before going to Christ Chapel, the former Southern Baptist and Catholic was a deacon at Christ the King MCC, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, and worship coordinator at MCC Fresno, California and an exhorter at MCC Long Beach. Rev. Lewis is a member of United Campus Ministries at CSU, Long Beach, co-founder and past treasurer of Fresno Human Rights Coalition and one of the original organizers of the Wilde/Stein Democratic Club.

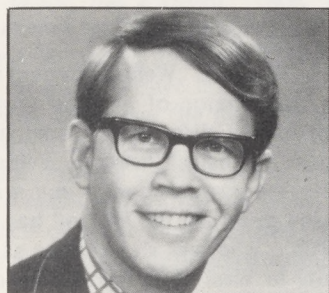


REV. MARILYN RUTH MARR, (34)
The Rev. Marilyn Ruth Marr is presently the worship coordinator of MCC Tampa, Florida. Before going to Tampa she served as worship coordinator in MCC St. Louis, Missouri where she had been a deacon and an exhorter. She also trained and worked for suicide prevention in that city. A registered nurse, Rev. Marr is attending Christian International University. Marr said she believes the goal of UFMCC is to preach and to teach that God loves you regardless of who or what you are. Marr said she became an MCC minister to answer God's call. "I feel the need to be a servant and ambassador for Christ," she said. Marr thinks there are many ways to serve God and that "sometimes the laity can reach out and touch others through their God-given talents." A Southern Baptist by background, she feels that together we can reach more people and do the work God has called us out to do.



REV. JEAN HART (32)

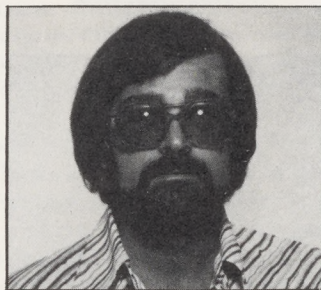
The Rev. Jean Hart, who is the associate pastor of MCC of the Valley, North Hollywood, California, was a charter member of MCC Sacramento, California. While in Sacramento, Hart was a member of the Board of Directors, served as a deacon and exhorter and was the leader of 'Guitars Unlimited.' As associate pastor in the Valley, Hart counsels and encourages lay involvement in the church. "The laity is the church in action, its true evangelists. The laity is the life, breath and pulse of the church." Rev. Hart has attended Sacramento City College, Samaritan Theological Institute and California State University, Sacramento.



REV. REID L. CHRISTENSEN (45)

The Rev. Reid L. Christensen received a B.A. from Michigan State University and was advertising director for a daily newspaper before becoming a minister. He has taken courses from Samaritan and is now taking correspondence courses from Christian International University. Christensen said he felt a calling at the age of 21 but because of his sexual orientation, went into journalism instead. "Soon after discovering MCC the call was extremely strong and the doors seemed to be opening," he explained. He was a deacon at Good Shepherd Parish MCC in Chicago, Illinois and an exhorter at MCC St. Louis, Missouri. He then became worship coordinator at MCC Illiamo, Quincy, Illinois. He was the first minister to train and to volunteer for the Quincy Sui-

cide Prevention and Crisis Service. He believes that the church must be built upon lay members. "Any change of pastoral leadership should not be devastating to the church. Laypeople in command of important roles assure each transition to be orderly," Christensen explained.



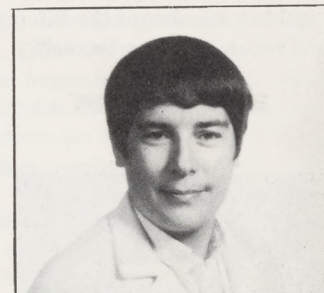
REV. PEPPER SHIELDS (37)

The Rev. Pepper Shields is a minister in residence at MCC All Saints, Los Angeles, California where he does counseling and assists in worship and program planning. Before entering the ministry Shields worked in management and systems analysis. Shields was an exhorter through the Detroit church and was also co-worship coordinator in MCC Ft. Wayne, Indiana. He said, "Having long sensed a call to become involved in the sharing of the Gospel, I've felt frustrated by my previous church's refusal to accept my being gay. MCC offers me a vehicle to, as a whole, honest human, share God with humanity." He has attended Ft. Wayne Bible College and Samaritan Theological Institute. Shields has been involved in community work as well. He was co-founder of Gay Rights Coalition in Ft. Wayne, was an advisor to various gay, educational and social service programs and tutored trainable retarded children and slow learners. Shields says he is strongly committed to the concept that we are priests to each other. "Each of us, clergy and laity, is the church and we need each other if we are to be effectively doing the task to which we are all called," he said.



REV. ALAN LAPAYOVER (26)

The Rev. Alan LaPayover is on staff at MCC New York, New York and attends Union Theological Seminary. He has his B.A. in theatre arts performance from Penn State University. While at Penn he was a member of the Governor's Council for Sexual Minorities and was past president of the Homophiles of Penn State. Currently LaPayover is working with the Gay/Lesbian Caucus of Union. He has also served as worship coordinator of MCC New Haven, Connecticut. LaPayover sees the purpose of UFMCC "to proclaim, live, embody and BE the Good News of God's liberating love, to continue in the witness of Jesus' vision of the Kingdom of God." We do this he explained, "by helping heal the brokenness of lives and challenging the evil and injustice of the society that causes such brokenness. The experience of our lives as lesbians and gay men give us an incredibly radical opportunity to see, dream and fight for a new way of being the way of God as whole, loving people."



REV. KAY BONNIE PALIN (33)

The Rev. Kay Bonnie Palin, who is a minister in residence at Casa de Cristo MCC in Phoenix, Arizona, is presently working on a feasibility study for another MCC in the East Phoenix, West Tempe area. She has a varied religious background of Congregationalist, Baptist and Roman Catholic. She said she was called to the UFMCC professional ministry to share the love and acceptance that she found in her personal re-

lationship with Christ. Palin said she thinks the Fellowship's main outreach is to the homophile community because of the neglect in this area by other Christian churches. In regards to the laity, Palin believes that they have the opportunity to share God's love with people who might not go to any church or come in contact with a clergy person. "I believe in the ministry of all believers. I believe that the laity has a ministry both within the church and in the world," she said. Rev. Palin attended Phoenix College and Samaritan Theological Institute.

REV. DENIS MOORE (39)

Rev. Moore teaches Bible and membership classes in MCC Portland, Oregon. Other responsibilities include being advisor for the music and exhorter programs. Prior to his ministerial duties, Rev. Moore was a human sexuality instructor. He has a B.S. in psychology from Portland State University and also attended Bob Jones University in Greenville, South Carolina. A former Conservative Baptist, Moore said he became an MCC minister "to assist in meeting the spiritual needs of the gay community and of all who need this ministry." Rev. Moore believes that the Christian ministry is a shared responsibility. "It requires that all of us do our part, laity and clergy together. Lay ministry is vital to the success of God's work," Moore said. Moore also works for the Counseling Center for Sexual Minorities, participates in the Portland Town Council and is a member of the Interagency Team for Teaching Human Sexuality.



REV. CATHERINE ELLIOTT (29)

The Rev. Catherine Elliott has a B.S. from Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa and a M.S. from the University of Oregon in Eugene. She was a recreational therapist before becoming a minister and is now at

Church of the Holy Spirit MCC in Des Moines, Iowa. She believes the laity is the outreach of the church. "They need to be trained and afforded opportunities to reach out to others regarding God's love," she said. Elliott has had previous affiliation with the Evangelical Free Church and with the United Methodist Church.



REV. CHARLES K. STEELE (27)

The Rev. Charles K. Steele said that he feels God has been preparing him for the ministry his entire life. "My call didn't come to me overnight. I want to be able to help to bring others to know Christ and to experience God as I have," Steele said. He has studied at Slippery Rock State College in Pennsylvania and at Kent State in Ohio. He has also taken correspondence and extension courses from Samaritan Theological Institute. Steele, who was an exhorter at MCC Akron, Ohio, taught membership classes and led rap groups there. He was also worship coordinator at MCC Columbus, Ohio. In addition to his church work, Steele underwent an extensive program in crisis intervention and drug abuse and worked with that program. He has also written articles and spoken about counseling the homosexual. He is the new pastor of Open Door Chapel MCC in Ft. Wayne, Indiana.

REV. KEITH E. SPARE (29)

The Rev. Keith E. Spare holds a B.S. and a M.S. in counseling from Kansas State University. He will also receive his Master's of Divinity this fall from Saint Paul School of Theology. Rev. Spare is a former United Methodist and believes the laity must play the central role in the life of the living church. He said, "Clergy are servants of God who facilitate and nurture the laity. However, it is the laity who are in the best position to further the Gospel message by living, learning and sharing with people every-

where." Before becoming a minister, Spare was a counselor in private practice. His duties at MCC of Greater Kansas City include being a worship leader, preaching, counseling and para-professional counselor trainer for the crisis line. He is also chairperson for the Stewardship Committee and Assistant Coordinator of the Ministry Team. He is founder of Gay Talk crisis line and a member of Gay United Methodists. Spare also founded the Gay Rights Group in Manhattan, Kansas. He said he became a MCC minister because the integration of his religious life, professional and personal life could best be achieved and expressed as a minister.



REV. ROGER E. WEBB, (31)

The Rev. Roger E. Webb is founder and worship coordinator of a study group in Santa Barbara, California. A graduate of Samaritan Theological Institute, Webb says, "Entering the servanthood is my way of loving God in return for all God has given me." Webb, who was an exhorter at MCC All Saints in West Hollywood, California, says he sees the purpose of the Fellowship to once again renew God's witness of love and transformation in the world. "It is through the 'least' of a people, God can show the 'most' of God to a world in need," he said. Webb has had 3½ years of liberal arts education and one year of law school.

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CROSSROADS



A cross is formed by points of confrontation. Confrontation and conflict are inevitable consequences of maintaining the truth as it is given a Christian. This special CROSSROADS section is about such struggles; three Christians share conflicts into which their faith has led them. Our first piece, written by an Elder of the Universal Fellowship, serves as a preface; it is titled *Cross and Conflict*.
The Editor

Reading the last few issues of *In Unity and The Gay Christian* have been something like going to a ball game, and not letting yourself become part of the crowd. The controversy, presenting pros and cons anent mythology inside and outside the Scriptures can be compared to the complaints we frequently hear in local congregations from our members. We always seem to have people who are QUITTING the church--be it for good or poor reasons. What we seem to forget is that conflict is a necessary ingredient for Christians. For a long time we have so domesticated Christ that we are not aware that Christ himself said that he "came not to bring peace, but a sword." (Mat. 10:34).

We cannot read the life of Jesus, however, without becoming increasingly aware that the more he performed his ministry of love, the more bitter was the hostility and conflict which raged about him. WHY? we may well ask. Perhaps the answer lies in the fact that to *teach and to live the truth* - in the presence of error and falsehood - *always brings conflict and misunderstanding*.

This is not to imply that there is error or falsehood in the recent exchange of controversial opinions. The point which is important to make, in my opinion, is that for the Christian-CONFLICT IS INEVITABLE! The modern Church is not aware of this dimension of Christian reality. Many a church sets as the ultimate standard for its existence the maintenance of pseudo-harmony and peace. When this is the basic attitude of a church, it has surrendered genuine creativity and lost authentic discipleship!!

There is ample Biblical testimony that anyone who truly follows Christ must be ready for conflict. There will always be tension between people who are joyful disciples of Christ, seeking to live up to Christ's standards for our lives. These will inevitably run counter to the actualities and practices of human society. So, be prepared--if you want to be a Christian--to live in a hostile environment.

Sociologists tell us that conflict is inevitable in social change; that conflict opens up great opportunities for creative advance if we understand the issues involved. One of the tragedies of modern Christians, both individually and collectively, is that they are often unwilling to enter the fray and fight for justice, for right, for fair treatment, for honest government, for good politics. CONFLICT IS THOUGHT OF BY TOO MANY CHRISTIANS AS SOMETHING TO BE FEARED LIKE THE PLAGUE AND TO BE AVOIDED AT ALL COSTS. Sharp disagreements are inevitable.

There is no human development without facing challenge, difficulty, or opposition. If social progress is to be made on fundamental matters, existing structures of power and privilege must be challenged. Such deeply rooted interests never yield gracefully nor easily.

In any major social change, there is involved a range of public opinion, running from a few extremists at one end, through the comparatively less committed mass of the citizenry in the middle, to the extremists at the other end. THE PEOPLE IN THE CENTER, BY THE SWINGING OF THEIR ALLEGIANCE, DETERMINE THE FINAL DECISION. When the individual Christian or a Christian church refuses to disagree sharply with the extremists at either end, we have little hope of exerting influence on those in the middle who will shape the future. The more we shy away from controversy, and we only mumble to ourselves, or are silent, the more likely it is that we opposition either to the left or to the right. If we do not enter the fray, we condemn ourselves to take the consequences.

The modern church, in its feverish search for pseudo-harmony and for isolation from conflict, has crucified Christ afresh. In recent years there have been several instances in which a lonely minister has taken a prophetic stand leading to widespread opposition in the community, only to find his/her own congregation turning against him/her.

phetic stand leading to widespread opposition in the community, only to find his/her own congregation turning against him/her.

TROY PERRY TOOK A PROPHETIC STAND IN OCTOBER OF 1968. I decided then to cast my lot with him, and at that first general conference in Los Angeles in 1970, I stated that this church body had NO CHOICE BUT TO SEPARATE from the established BODY OF CHRIST; for the "Church" had forsworn its right by withdrawing from the conflict! How tragic it is that almost no one expects the church to be authentically different, and certainly not to wage vigorous campaigns.

John W. Gardner has suggested that all people should adopt for their lives the pattern followed by scientists. Scientists are "problem seekers." As Gardner says:

"Unlike most of the rest of humanity, who regard problems as something to be avoided, the scientist goes out and looks for them. . . Total absence of problems would be the beginning of death for a society or an individual. We are not constructed to be solvers by nature --- problem-seekers, problem-requirers." (*No Easy Victories*)

I REJOICE IN THAT! What a great time to be alive! And what a great time for the Church to be the Church! Did not Christ say that people were blessed when in conflict and facing danger? "Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so men persecuted the prophets who were before you." (Matt. 5:11).

It is imperative that the Church not be silent and seek for peace when there is injustice all around. *The continued page 26*

Rev. Elder John Hose

IMAGINING GOD INCLUSIVELY

To begin the task of imagining God inclusively, I can implement in my own thought-patterns the biblical insight that "God is spirit" -- not by degrading body and elevating but rather by emphasizing the universal dimensions of the "spiritual body" of God-in-Christ. John 4:24 gives assistance in that direction, telling me that "God is spirit; and those who worship [God] must worship in spirit and in truth." This statement offers the worship-experience to everybody because no one is cut off from access to spirit, to that which is intangible yet so real that we call the absence of it death and the presence of it life. Prison walls cannot cut a person off from spirit, nor can color, or poverty, or lack of education. It is true, of course, that tyrannical societies seek to break the spirit in order to render an individual thoughtlessly obedient. But it is significant that God takes special care of people whose spirits have been broken: "I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick" (Ezekiel 34:16).

It is the cumulative effect of female experience which warns me against using "God is spirit" in the traditional way of setting up a hierarchy, with spirit superior to body. For centuries, females have been associated with the body and its passions, while males have associated themselves with the mind and spirit, with reason. And the concomitant value-judgement has been, of course, that Reason (good) must control Passion (evil). From there it has been only a tiny step to the association of females with the demonic and males with the deity. I think that enough has been written on this subject in recent years that I need not labor the point.

Most Christians are aware that biblical injunctions about living "in the spirit" rather than "in the flesh" are not aimed at defamation of the physical body, but rather are used to distinguish between locating one's ultimate identity in the private, localized ego-consciousness ("the flesh") as opposed to locating one's ultimate identity within the universal "spiritual body" shared with all created beings and amounting to more than the sum of its parts (the Body of Christ, "the spirit").

There is nothing bad about the physical body and nothing bad about the localized ego-consciousness, although from the biblical standpoint there is something temporary about both. The body that will be resurrected will apparently be qualitatively different, a "spiritual body", according to I Corinthians 15:44; but the fact that body is slated for resurrection says something about

the goodness of body. And the consciousness which knows as it is known (I Corinthians 12:12) is also qualitatively different from the severely limited temporal consciousness. It is only when my human ego absolutizes itself and the physical body it resides in that I am thrown into a state of alienation from God (the Wholeness of Being and Becoming) and hence from all other creatures. Inevitably at such times, I fear the death of my physical body and want my own advancement more than anybody else's.

In the New Creation, there is no exclusion of anybody on any basis whatsoever. According to Galatians 3:27-28, we all become one person, one body inside one garment (the Christ). For centuries, of course, the representatives of the church have been speaking of the Messiah, the Christ, as God incarnated, spirit embodied, Word enfleshed, divinity humanized, humankind divinized. But not many have taken the next logical step of recognizing that if that is true, then it makes perfect sense to imagine the Christ as female, black, Indian, Oriental, poor Apalachian white, or indeed as any form created beings can take. (I think of Gerard Manley Hopkins' poem addressed to Christ, who for him broke forth from the sight of a falcon riding on the wind -- "The Windhover: To Christ our Lord.").

The Christ is in no created form exclusively, but in all such forms inclusively ("in him all things hold together," Colossians 1:17). For in the New Creation, "there is one body and one spirit...who is above all and through all and in all" (Ephesians 4:4-6). This kind of imagining, based squarely upon an inclusive reading of Scripture supports social justice because it makes available to every human being the empowerment of identifying herself or himself with the divine. It also provides the best possible basis for restraint and respect in the use of natural resources.

Second, I can learn to think of the word God as the designation of an office or role (the whole Structure and Process of Reality) rather than as a masculine word denoting a physical masculine person like Jove on Mount Olympus. The problem of imagining exclusively a Goddess or Great Mother is that it tends to fragment the same way that literalistic imagining of God as exclusively Father has done. Worse yet, because of centuries of patriarchal condescension toward women, feminizing a word immediately tends to trivi-

In Unity is privileged to be the first to print this excerpt from Dr. Mollenkott's book, *Speech, Silence, Action!* to be published in 1980 by Abingdon.

Dr. Virginia Mollenkott



alize it. Apart from a small contingent of feminist theologians, people feel that the role of deity is split and trivialized by feminizing the word used to designate it. The feminist theologians who prefer to speak only of the Goddess will, of course object that is exactly their point: the human consciousness must learn to recognize the female as equally as divine as the male. That point I must fully agree with; but I doubt that designating the office of deity as Goddess is the way to go about it. Let us make some analogies to illustrate what I mean.

The moment one speaks of a chairwoman, because of social conditioning the imagination pictures garden clubs and theater parties. The word chairperson was invented to allow both males and females to imagine themselves in such leadership roles. But in actual practice chairperson has not been used when men chaired (they remained chairmen) but only when women were chairing. The end result was not an advance for women, but a wipe-out of our bodily nature, our femaleness. Chairperson has therefore only made matters worse.. The solution would be either to use the neutral word chair as a noun as well as a verb, or to view the word chairman as a designation of office or role rather than as sexually differentiated. In this case I think the word chair is clearly the more satisfactory solution, since it focuses on work to be done (chairing) without designating the sex of the doer.

Alma Graham wrote several years ago about the "language of equal opportunity," arguing that women are invariably trivialized when jobs are labelled as if work varied according to the sex of the worker. When I came across Graham's article, I recalled that

Katharine Hepburn, who has a powerful self-concept, has always referred to herself as an actor, not as an actress: she is "one who acts on the stage or screen." By analogy, a woman who writes books is an author, not an authoress; a woman who executes a will is an executor, not an executrix; a woman who is elected to the highest post in her government is a President, not (God forbid!) a Presidentrix or a Presidentress. Similarly, jobs should properly be named by the work performed, irrespective of the sex of the performer. So I should train myself to think of an insurance agent rather than an insurance man, a telephone line repairer rather than a lineman, an oil deliverer rather than an oilman, a mail carrier rather than a mailman, a member of Congress rather than a congressman. Such language makes it possible for any human being to make imaginative identification with any job and thus be empowered to seek it.

If, then, society learns to think about the word God not as the name of a specific person (analogous to Jove) but rather as a job description or the designation of an office --the only office that contains no limitations whatsoever, and certainly not the limitation of human sexuality --then we will have opened up that concept to every human being. The fact that the Bible uses the word God for the One Deity and the same word for pagan idols (uncapitalized) seems to indicate that the word is to be thought of as designating an office (Supreme Being) rather than a proper name. And

the fact that both male and female are made in God's image and designated as God's agents (Genesis 1:26-27) ought to help demolish the notion that the term God is sex-defined (or confined).

In this connection, I am reminded of my reaction when first I read the anonymous medieval work called *The Cloud of Unknowing*. Having been reared on strictly propositional Christianity, I was astounded to be told in *Privy Counselling*, "When you go apart to be alone for prayer . . . reject all thoughts, be they good or be they evil. See that nothing remains in your conscious mind save a naked intent stretching out towards God. Leave it stripped of every particular idea about God . . ." (p. 149). I realized, with a jolt, that even my ideas about God are part of my ego-consciousness, part of the knowledge which will vanish away, part of my private judgment-system which must be relinquished if I am to enjoy real communion with the divine.

I read on. My fourteenth-century mentor, whoever she or he may be, counselled me that "I want your thought of self to be as naked and simple as your thought of God, so that you may be spiritually united to him with out any fragmentation and scattering of your mind. He is your being and in him, you are what you are, not only because he is the cause and being of all that exists, but because he is your cause and the deep center of your being. Therefore...think of yourself and him in the same way: that is, with the simple awareness that he is as he is, and that you are as you are. In this way your thought will not be fragmented or scattered, but unified in him who is all" (p. 150). I feel no doubt that were that medieval mystic living today, those masculine pronouns concerning God would instantly be either expanded or deleted. Clearly the author thinks of God as the designation of an all-inclusive Presence beyond any human comprehension, let alone any human limitation. As I encountered these great insights, I realized how very grateful I felt to the Women's Movement for forcing me out of the mold of thinking of God as somehow definable according to human categories. And for that reason, a switch to Goddess-language is for me only a return to a mind-forged manacle, not liberation at all.

But I do consider it essential to bear witness to my belief that the word God designates an office and not a male being. To do this I must consistently use inclusive pronouns or a least avoid male pronouns. I prefer to repeat the term God rather than to use a limiting and therefore misleading masculine or feminine or neuter pronoun. This gets especially sticky when I need to use a reflexive construction. I could try James W. White's solution ("God gave Godself"), which is certainly better than "God gave himself." Or I could say "God gave herself/himself/itself" as an awkward but insistent way of driving home the absolute inclusiveness of the Godhead.

The thesis of *The Cloud of Unknowing* is that as long as I am living within the limitations of morality, God will remain surrounded by a cloud of unknowing that I can in no way penetrate cognitively, but only by love. This realization is, the author assures me, truly liberating: "For in the realm of the spirit heaven is as near up as it is down, behind as before, to left or to right. The access to heaven is through desire We need not strain our spirit in all directions to reach heaven, for we dwell there already through love and desire" (p. 127). Although we twentieth-century people may flatter ourselves that through the scientific world-view we have liberated ourselves from naive understandings of the universe and of a God-out-there, this fourteenth-century person understood plenty! And she or he would probably feel sorry for us as we flounder around struggling with God-language in almost primitive naivete about the nature of worshiping "in spirit and in truth."

Third, I can stimulate more inclusive imagining of God by using a variety of biblically based epithets or ascriptions. In Old English poetry, word-pictures were drawn by use of compound epithets called kennings, so that the ocean might be spoken of as the "whale-path," a king as a "ring-giver," or a sword as a "fire-flasher." Use of Kenning-like epithets concerning God would serve as reminders of God's myriad roles in my life. Continual, repetative reference to God as Mother or Father focuses attention on beginnings, on God's creatorial and parental functions only. (Even so, sometimes referring to God as Parent rather than as either Mother or Father forces me to think about what parenting is apart from sex roles: what is its essence?) But constant searching for fresh biblical metaphors would widen my awareness of what God does not only over, but also through and in the creation: Sea-walker, Light-bringer, Sin-forgiver, Star-kindler, Whirlwind-speaker, Food-supplier, Life-restorer, and so forth.

Prayers may address God simply as you, but when that feels too abrupt or my heart is overflowing with love, all sorts of phrases may grow out of scriptural usage. "you who have healing in your wings," "you who inhabit Eternity," "you who are my rock," "you who swing the stars in space," and so forth. And they may, of course, also be based on my own experience: "you who are my shield from gossip," "you who visit me on golden eyelids," "you who have provided the love of friends." Naturally, none of this denies the importance of single-word ascriptions like Redeemer, Sustainer, Friend, Comforter, or Guide.

Since all language about God is figurative and limited and probably to some degree a distortion of the One hidden within the Cloud of Unknowing, and I need constant reminders that no single phrase or word-picture can possibly be telling the whole truth about God. So the more variety, the better. Getting in a rut of a few too-narrow images tempts any person or group to forget that we do not yet know as we are known. From that kind of forgetfulness springs idolatry, the absolutizing of our own minds and their imagery.

Fourth, I can help myself imagine God more inclusively by continuing to explore the female imagery occasionally applied to God in the Old and New Testaments. Although I included many such images in *Women, Men, and the Bible* (Abingdon, 1977) and added some more in the cassette study course by the same title, once in a while I come upon new ones. For instance, it excites me that when Jesus spoke to his disciples about the future time when they would have to do without his physical presence in the world, he described his own suffering and the history of suffering humanity through a birth-metaphor: "When a woman is in travail, she has her sorrow, because her hour has come; but when she is delivered of the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a child is born into the world" (John 16:21, RSV). A few minutes later, John tells us Jesus began his prayer with the words, "The hour has come." Thus he identified the anguish of the cross with the pangs of giving birth, and identified himself with a woman in labor. His pain would be forgotten as soon as he had given birth to the New Humanity.

One reason this image excites me is that this very passage was part of my personal oppression. My gynecologist was a professing Christian, and when it was time for me to go into the hospital to give birth to Paul, he quoted to me what he probably still quotes to every woman as she goes into labor: "A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world" (KJV). Because he had told me that my child would be a girl, my heart wrenched when I heard the reference to a man-child. As a new contraction started, I groaned, "But what if it's a girl?" He shrugged, "Oh, I don't imagine the sex of the baby matters much to God." Nevertheless, I was triumphant.

phant when I had a boy, partly because, unconsciously, I was convinced that John 16:21 really implied that boys were better than girls. To the detriment of my self-respect, I continued to think so for many years. No wonder: not only the King James Version, but also contemporary versions like the New English Bible, the Phillips New Testament in Modern English, and the Jerusalem Bible all speak of the joy of man's birth! Yet the Greek word translated "a man" clearly means "a human being." In such ways has female presence and power in Scripture--and in the imagination of religious women--been nearly eradicated.

As biblical feminists keep coming up with new awareness of the female aspects of the Godhead, I think several cautions are in order. One of them is that I doubt the wisdom of separating off the Holy Spirit as the feminine Person of the Holy Trinity. Such separation breaks the unity of the One Godhead, as if there were really three gods in Christianity, two of them male and one of them female. Besides, such separation still leaves the female in the minority, eternally "outvoted" by a two-to-one power bloc, and therefore does very little for the female self-concept. In addition, the Bible utilizes female imagery in connection with all three Persons of the Trinity, and I believe it is best to mirror scriptural usage as much as possible. However, because we are engaged in struggling out of the shackles of patriarchy, we will want to increase the proportion of female imagery concerning the Godhead; and of course we will want to take special pains to affirm the right of all human beings to imagine God in the ways that empower them as blacks or Indians or Orientals or whatever.

My second caution is that we must not imagine that the use of feminine imagery concerning the Godhead will be enough by itself to bring about an end of sexist oppression in society or even in the church community. Unless the "feminine" roles and aspects of God are valued as highly as the "masculine" roles and aspects, our sense that "the Lord our God is one" will still be fragmented, males will still be encouraged toward primacy, women will still be diminished into secondary status, and community will still be broken. My favorite illustration of this comes from one of the sermons of the great seventeenth-century English poet and preacher, John Donne. Because he was a careful student of the Bible, Donne occasionally spoke of God in feminine terms; but he regarded God-as-Mother as distinctly more "infirm" and unquestionably "inferior" to God-as-Father. Consequently, at a wedding he felt free to speak of the woman as the man's "staff," commenting that after all, nobody values his staff as much as he does his own legs. It would be hard to imagine a more flagrant violation of the injunction in Ephesians 5 for husbands to love their wives "as their own bodies"; but Donne and his congregation were reading the Bible through sexist-colored glasses.

As long as people continue to value spirit more than body, then images of God feeding her children will be pre-empted in Christian imaginations by male priests in flowing gowns handing out bread and wine and washing the dishes afterwards upon the altar. Whereas I in no way minimise the political effects of the way human beings imagine God's appearance, I want to point out that the process can work in the other directions as well. Changes in societal structures will help our imaginations become more inclusive and empowering. When fathers share fully in parenting tasks and mothers share fully in spiritual leadership, and when single persons and gay persons are highly respected in church and society we will all be in a better position to imagine God more expansively. ■

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PORTRAIT OF AN ELDER: JEAN WHITE

The following testimony was not easy to give. It was the preface to the first sermon delivered by the newly-elected Reverend Elder Jean White to the Ninth General Conference, August 16th, 1979 in Los Angeles. For those who were not there to hear it, it serves as a stirring introduction to our first Elder from outside the United States (Rev. White is pastor of MCC London). Even more, it is a story of the suffering that tries, strengthens, and is eventually redeemed by faith.

It's the ten year anniversary for you here in this Fellowship and it's also a ten year anniversary for me. On the 21st of August ten years ago, I was let out of a Communist concentration camp. And I want to tell you a little bit about my background and how I got there and how I got out of there, too.

I was brought up in a very, very strict sect in England, the Brethren -- and believe me, they were very strict, almost Calvinistic, almost Puritan. I didn't have my hair cut until I was 26 because I thought it was my crowning glory. I didn't pray without a hat either, would you believe? ...We always had something to cover our heads with because we believed it was right and proper. So I grew up in a very, very strict environment.

When I got old enough I realized I was called to preach the gospel and I didn't know how I was going to do it because, you know, in the Brethren women just have to keep silent. I was told the only way was to become a missionary. I prayed very, very much about this and eventually I felt the Lord calling me to go to Bible school where I went for three years.

Prior to this I had done my nurse's training and my midwifery training (you don't have this in the states; it means I deliver babies -- over 5,000 of them...) and I went to Bible school...and during that time I became engaged to a doctor and we both felt called to go to Africa. He went ahead

of me. It was during this time the Congo Rebellion took place and he was one of the missionaries that was killed. So I had to rethink what I was going to do with my life.

During that time I suppose I had known I was gay. I didn't know the word 'gay'; I hardly knew the word 'homosexual.' I knew there was something different about me. So perhaps I was relieved when I did not have to get married.

I went to China with a missionary society that used to be called the China Inland Mission which became the Overseas Missionary Fellowship... Well, of course, when the Communists came into China in 1948, the China Inland Mission ...had to change their name and go into other areas of Asia. But I really felt called to China and to the Chinese people; I was sent to a colony called Macao which is north of Hong Kong, a tiny little place on the border of China, on the mainland. I was there and was very happy there for quite some years.

Then the Red Guard movement began in China and came down through the province of Canton and it swept down close to the border to Macao. There is a little strip, like the Gaza strip, between Macao and the mainland and many of us missionaries were allowed to go into that strip to clinics where refugees were coming across the border. We used to go twice a week to hold clinics there. One day we crossed the border, took

clinic; we tried to get back and we were not allowed to come back across that guard post. And then began three years of what I can do nothing but call absolute hell...

There were times during those three years when I doubted God.-- I was there with ten nuns and my co-worker in a very, very small room. And, believe me, if you've got ten Catholic nuns praying on that side of the room and two Evangelicals praying on this side of the room, it becomes very traumatic. *(laughter and applause)*

We had lots of problems and I can tell you that little molehills become great big mountains. Like who washed first in the water in the morning when you had one little bowl of water for twelve... The first year wasn't too bad... You came to terms with being isolated, being locked up, living with other people in a confined place. And then the Red Guards decided they were going to take us before Appeals Courts. And then began absolute terror.

I don't like testifying about this but I have to and I'm going to... I feel with the Lord that I should share with you some of the things that happened in that prison camp, because I think it shows you what the Lord can bring you through. None of us know what opposition, what persecution we might be called to suffer for Jesus' name.



At the Appeals Court, I was accused of having killed a child by giving it an injection... This had been six months prior and it had been penicillin, I couldn't even remember (by) then. But anyway, they had gone through different case files and found this thing and I was accused of the murder of this child. And the Court went on for about five days. During that time we had to stand. If you stand for hours in front of people, believe me, you flag; they put ropes around our waists. We had one Chinese student standing on this side and (another) standing on that side to hold the ropes and when we began to fall they pulled the ropes so we couldn't go right down. So I had rope burns that still show to this day... On the third day they began another way of making us jump when we began to get tired; they took pieces of cloth and soaked them in kerosene and they lit them. If we started to go they just flicked them at our legs. And today I have many burns on my legs.

Well, you get used to things and, believe me, the Lord gives you strength. He really does. You come away from these things and you think Lord, just let me die. And then you turn around and say God, I don't believe you're there, God -- and you wonder why you're talking to a God you don't believe in.. So, you see, I have cursed God. But I also know that God has brought me through it.

For two years and eight months my parents didn't know if I was alive or dead. And then one day a journalist was released from Peking called Antony Grey... He was brought to our camp. During that time he heard some of us were still alive (there were only eight of us still living). And so he was able to... go back to the U.K. and to Ireland and to say that we were still alive as far as he knew at that time. They were able, then, to start bargaining for our release; but it still did not happen straightaway. You know, many things happen to you in those camps... As missionaries we were raped; I tell you they raped some of the 70 year old nuns, they didn't care. But you know, the Lord brings you through it all and you go on and you rejoice. Eventually there came the day of our release and we were brought home.

When I say we were brought home -- we had to crawl across a bridge to get home. On that bridge two of the nuns died. We dragged them, we thought they had just gone unconscious... we realized when we got to the other side of the Mungung To bridge that they were dead.

We were taken to Hong Kong and I spent quite a long time in the hospital there and in England when I went home. I had a lung removed... and I've had lots of plastic surgery on my legs. The one thing that kept me going was the knowledge that Jesus Christ was with me and that he had sent me to preach the gospel. And I still believe he has sent me to preach the gospel.

It really wasn't the end of what God was doing for me...

While I was still in that prison camp I decided that I had to come to terms with being gay. And it wasn't easy because I still thought it was a sin; I thought of it as a thing of the Devil really. But I decided that if I ever came out of that camp I would find out if there were ever any other gay Christians around the place. Well, when I got home I decided to forget all about it (but) then I started to think again and realized that I could not live a double life. And I knew what was inside and I realized I was representing myself in a wrong light to many people. And so I started to seek and it wasn't so easy.

I met an Anglican dean of one of the churches and he happened to be gay and married ...I talked with him and he introduced me to many, many people. During that time he introduced me to a girl who decided at my age that it was time that I visited a gay club. I had never been in a pub, let alone a club, if you know what I mean. And so I had a very, very interesting and traumatic evening. (*Laughter*) I was

continued from page 19 words of George Russel to Rudyard Kipling are among the most incriminating I have ever read. He wrote:

"You had the ear of the world, and you poisoned it with bigotry and prejudice. You had the power of song and you have always used it in behalf of the strong against the weak."

My soul, what an indictment! And to anyone who is aware, it is quite possible that unless we change, the historians will have to write that this is precisely what Christians and the Church have done in our time! This is no time for timid Christians nor timid churches.

The late C.S. Lewis carried on a lengthy correspondence with a friend in America. He was aware that one of the reasons this woman was desperately ill was her attitude. In one of the letters, he wrote to her:

taken to a mixed gay club in London. I was petrified, even more petrified than I am tonight (*laughter*). It was just an unfortunate thing that some of the people from my missionary society happened to be (distributing) what you call "flyers", we call "tracts" in that particular area and I was seen coming out of this den of iniquity, supposedly holding the hand of a woman. I really wasn't! -- Perhaps I should say unfortunately, I don't know...

I was brought before the missionary board; they didn't ask if I was in there evangelizing. ...They told me that being raped on the mission field had made me turn to women. Then they told me I was demon-possessed. They gave me nine months, the rest of my furlough, to make up my mind: ...was I going to see a Christian psychiatrist, would I have the demons cast out of me or would I resign? I went through real hell deciding what I was going to do. Then I realized God had called me in honesty and truth. I decided to resign. And I told them I was not demon possessed. I was gay and I did not think it was demons. So I resigned from the mission board, and I wondered what God would do for me in my life.

Then this same dean who had helped me very, very much and is still helping me, told me that Norman Pittenger was holding a meeting in London with a man called Troy Perry-- and why didn't I go up to Canton Hall and hear him. And I said, oh no! (I'd never met a real bunch of gay people and I didn't know that I wanted to... It was alright

"Notice in Dante that the lost souls are entirely concerned with their past! Not so the saved." (*Letters To An American Lady*, pg. 96)

How profound! The Church and its members who are concerned to hold on to the past and to keep things the way they have been shall be damned and lost. But the Church that faces the future unafraid with the Lord shall be saved. This is no time for timid churches nor timid Christians. Let us accept the fact that whenever we are truly facing issues, there will be conflict. If we shrink from divergent points-of-view, differences of opinion, we will surely stagnate and die. Let us rather be like one of our naval heroes who said: "Damn the torpedoes, full steam ahead!" Today, we as Christians--if indeed we dare lay claim to that appellation must say: "Damn the opposition. I will not quit! As long as I serve Christ, I will not falter but enter into the conflict!" ■

for me to be gay, but I wasn't sure about the others) *(laughter)*. But I went to that meeting and I heard Norman Pittenger and I heard Troy Perry and I went away (just knowing) that I ought to do something about it. I went to a house where Jo McVay-Abbott and another man, Peter Embrie, were holding what in those days we used to call Bible Studies and we started services.

So I've been with MCC in London almost from the beginning. I've been in it and out of it, to be honest. I've been on the Committee [Board of Directors] and off the Committee - and then I really felt it was of God and then we had our problems. You know what it's like in all these small places; (you think) Lord, this can't be right. And then the Holy Spirit kept taking me back and back and back.

And then eventually a man called -- I'm sure you all know him -- Tom Bigelow came to England. He arrived on a Thursday and on Saturday...he came up to me (he had never seen me in his life before) and he said, "Sister, the Lord tells me you've got to be an exhorter." And I said, "Well, when the Spirit tells me I'll do it!" I thought what a funny man, why doesn't he go back where he comes from *(laughter and applause)*. I

didn't do anything about it but I was very convicted. I knew God had called me but I wasn't sure to what He had called me.

Eventually I became a deacon and then an exhorter and eventually the pastor of the London church -- and it's been a long way. It's been seven years that I've been with this fellowship and it's been a long road and it's been a good road.

This is my first General Conference and I'm thrilled to be here. How come I'm standing here, I don't know. I just know it's the Holy Spirit.

You know, last year I had a letter (which) I shared with Rev. Freda Smith...It was from someone who had been...one of the women who had voted me off the mission society. She wrote me (this) letter seven years later saying that she had a prophecy and she did not want to give it to me but she was going to. She told me that in the prophecy...I would keep crossing the seas and that I would be doing what was right and proper and that the Lord was going to lead me in a

new way and that the vision that I had was right. I think what she meant was MCC... She'd started praying for me and she hadn't prayed for me in seven years but she felt the Lord was going to send her to deliver me. And (instead) she realized the Lord was telling her to give me this message. She sent it by "Recorded Delivery" (meaning I had to sign for it) because she wanted to make sure it didn't fall into any other Evangelical hands if it didn't reach mine *(laughter)*. That woman is one of the leading (personalities) of what we call "Festival of Light", very much like your Anita Bryant ministry. The fact that she was now saying that she couldn't find anything in scripture that actually condemns me...I think that's wonderful, don't you? *(Applause)*

Much of that prophecy she sent...has come to pass. I've been to America four times in 12 months and I'd never been before in my life before last August. I can see the way the Lord has led me and I'm so grateful to be here. I just thank you for the confidence you've placed in me and I ask that you pray for me, that you'll ask the Holy Spirit to guide me and help me to be the Elder you'd like me to be. ■

God, I sometimes feel we humans try too hard to define/ categorize/ explain you
We use such big cumbersome words, difficult words . .

They call you OMNIPOTENT

I know you are able to move mountains/ bring peace/ change lives

They call you OMNISCIENT

I know you as being able to see through me/ know me/ understand me

They call you OMNIPRESENT

I know you as being everywhere I am
always able to find me

They call you IMMUTABLE

I know you are always the same/ never changing

They call you BENEVOLENT

I know you as caring: interested in my welfare/ my needs/wants/concerns
able to provide/protect/guide me

They speak of you as MERCIFUL

I know you as the One who saw my need/ my inability/ my separation
and lifted me up

They speak of you as INCARNATE

I know you as One who cares so much that you came to me in ways I could comprehend: AS A HUMAN BEING -- able to feel my pain/ temptations/ needs
and able to give me hope/ and ex ample/ and promise . .

In simple faith I reach out to you in my simple way

because you are the One who can see me in all my guilt/

know my every need/ heal my brokenness/ give me purpose/ meaning/ freedom

WHY WHY WHY

In answer I hear you say:

"Because my greatest attribute -- the one that says the most about me -- is that I AM LOVE "

Reverend Pepper Shields

The Bottom Line

t.earlye scott

Everyone is still talking about General Conference so I might as well do the same. Yes, I was there! The reason I wasn't introduced along with all of the other VIP's is simple. I begged Troy not to. You see, I just couldn't stand the thought of being mobbed and asked for my autograph everywhere I went. He finally agreed but as usual there was a price to pay. I had to give HIM my autograph and let him keep the pen I used. Isn't that kinky. He's so sentimental.

The end of General Conference also meant the end of summer vacation and the beginning of a new school year. I've always loved the first day of classes. There has always been a specialness about it. All those new faces are bright and eager. They are all planning on turning over a new leaf and really applying themselves this year.

The halls are packed with new sneakers, new blue jeans and clean unbent notebooks. New seniors enjoy giving wrong directions to the underclass students.

The teachers are eager too. They are filled with new energy, new ideas and new rested nerves.

Teachers and students catch up on all the newest gossip. Every school is like a "Peyton Place" so there's lots to know. Being curious, I was dying to know if I was part of the hot gossip around town. You see, I'm not there to be included in any of this ritual because I QUIT. Yup! I quit a ten year teaching career. In order to know if I was the topic of Peyton Place I had to be sneaky. I did the only decent thing I could think of. I wrote to a closeted teacher friend of mine. My suspicions were confirmed. I was definitely the topic of every department and grade level.

Apparently my principal couldn't wait to be the bearer of such a hot item. He told everyone he could think of. I can just see him inviting people into his big office and saying, "You won't believe this, but did you know..."

Some of you may be wondering how my principal found out about me. I told him. When I gave my notice I told him the whole sordid story. In fact I told lots of people when I left. It was great fun. All of my fantasies of "coming out" became reality.

I hated the heavy coming out scene. You know the ones. I have something awful to tell you. And then, always wondering if they'll love you after they know.

To one friend I said, "I got secretly married." After her appropriate shocked response I added, "to a woman." To another I said that I wanted to be a writer and that I was presently working on a book called LIES I TELL MY STUDENTS. Naturally she wanted to know what the book was about. I told her it was about a gay closeted school teacher. Another pause. "It's autobiographical," I added.

When I told the Biology teacher it was under less than ideal conditions. We were in her classroom and there were three students studying nearby. I whined, "I'm quitting and moving with my lover, who is a woman." She had no reaction. She hadn't heard anything I had said. I was mortified. I was whispering too softly. I couldn't believe it. I had to repeat it all. Out to the hall we went. I wanted to make sure that she heard me this time. Her reaction amazed me. She started crying. She was crying because she said that she imagined all the pain I must have gone through having to hide and to lie all of the time. I also told two former students of mine and they came to church and took communion with me. That was a super experience.

I do have regrets. I wish that I had told these friends of mine years ago. I could have saved myself much suffering and bitterness. And, if I had, I wouldn't have had to quit teaching! They would have FIRED me!

1980 PROFICIENCY EXAMS ANNOUNCED

All persons seeking to become professional ministers within the UFMCC and applying for their initial licenses must first pass certain proficiency exams. These proficiency examinations are in the four areas of Bible, History of Christian Thought, Practices of Ministry, and UFMCC Polity. The MCAC subcommittee on Standards has prepared and approved these examinations in consultation with Samaritan Theological Institute and has asked STI to administer the exams in all districts of the UFMCC in the U.S. and Canada on Friday, March 21 and Saturday, March 22. The two-day testing period will be monitored by members of the District Review Committee (DRC) in each district. Candidates for the licensed ministry in 1980 should inform their District Coordinator by December 31, 1979 that they wish to take the proficiency exams so that the District Coordinator may determine where in that district the exams will be administered.

Candidates must pass all four exams before they will be considered for the licensed ministry. If candidates have passed any or all exams in the previous two years, they do not have to repeat the exams they have passed.

The cost of the examinations is \$10 for the whole set, or \$3 per individual exam to cover duplicating, postage and grading. Checks or money orders should be made payable to "Samaritan Theological Institute" or "STI" and must be received prior to taking the examinations.

MCAC has requested that four STI faculty members be readers for these examinations and grade the examinations pass or fail. A score of 70 is required for passing. The examinations themselves will not be returned to the candidates, but a detailed critique will be sent to persons failing any of the exams.

The only one of these exams that a candidate can "cram" for is "UFMCC Polity" because that is based upon a set body of material. *continued page 30*

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cont'd from pg. 28 The other exams are structured to evaluate proficiency in certain areas, not knowledge of any one book or author. Differences in church background and theological viewpoint will be taken in account.

A description of the four examinations follows:

BIBLE

The Bible examination will be divided into three parts: an objective test on Bible content (closed book); an exegesis of selected Scriptural passages (open book); and sermon construction (open book). The Bible content test will include such areas as the books of the Bible, major Biblical figures and events, location of key passages, etc. In the exegesis section, the candidate will be asked to exegete two passages, one from the Old Testament and one from the New Testament. The books that these passages will be drawn from will be announced beforehand. Questions to be considered are: What is the meaning of this passage in terms of context (author, audience, message of book, place, time, etc.)? What is the contemporary significance of the meaning of this passage? How could one use it as the basis of a sermon in 1980? The candidate will of course use a Bible and is free to bring any textbooks, handbooks, commentaries, and dictionaries she/he wishes. An awareness of different theological positions in Biblical interpretation should be shown by one's choice of resources.

In sermon construction, the candidate will be asked to choose one of a number of hypothetical situations and then do a sermon outline to fit that situation. The candidate will determine a Biblical passage (s) to use as the basis for the sermon, do a brief exegesis of the passage (s), indicate why it helps to illuminate the situation in which one is preaching, and how one will use that passage (s) in the sermon. Then the candidate will develop a sermon outline with introduction, body, and conclusion.

HISTORY OF CHRISTIAN THOUGHT

The primary concern is that the candidate understand the Christian faith/tradition/heritage and be able to interpret it in practical teaching situations in the present day. Questions will be essay in nature, and will cover such areas as the development of Christian doctrines, sacraments, and worship, the major movements and personalities in Christian history, the growth and outreach of the Christian Church.

PRACTICS OF MINISTRY

The Practics exam will be divided into

four areas: worship, administration, counseling, and inreach - outreach. The candidate will be asked to explain their understanding of each of these aspects of the professional ministry and to apply this understanding to practical hypothetical situations

UFMCC POLITY

This will be based upon the current UFMCC By-Laws (revised 1979); the book *The Lord is My Shepherd* (the historical portions related to the founding of MCC); and the brochure, "The Universal Fellowship Today." The exam will include objective questions on the By-Laws and essay questions on the history and structure of the UFMCC. A good way to prepare for this UFMCC Polity exam would be to take the STI correspondence course, "UFMCC Polity," but this is not required. The cost of the correspondence course is \$40.

Copies of the 1979 proficiency examinations are available to any interested person from Samaritan Theological Institute for \$2.00 per set (covers duplicating, postage, and handling.) Condensed versions of *The Lord Is My Shepherd* are also available from STI for \$2.00.

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MURDER VICTIMS ARE BLACK

THE TEENAGE MALE AMERICAN
INDIAN HAS THE HIGHEST SUICIDE
RATE OF ANY SPECIES ON EARTH.

BEFORE WHITES CAME
TO THIS COUNTRY, THERE WAS
A ZERO SUICIDE RATE AMONG
AMERICAN INDIANS

WHEN LYNCHING WAS POPULAR IN
AMERICA, FINGERS OF BLACKS
WERE OFTEN DISPLAYED IN
BUTCHER SHOP WINDOWS.

BLACKS OFTEN HAD THEIR TEETH
PULLED, ONE AT A TIME, WHILE
THEY WERE STILL ALIVE
AND THEIR FINGERS AND TOES
AXED OFF BEFORE THEY WERE
LYNCHED.

TEN PERCENT OF ALL THIRD WORLD
PEOPLE ARE GAY

BLACK AND THIRD WORLD GAYS
ARE A VALUABLE AND NECESSARY
PART OF THE BODY OF CHRIST

*a message from your Fellowship
Committee on Racism*

from page 13 ecumenical witness to the Christian Church and to gay religious organizations. This, of course, greatly expands the responsibilities of that office.

The Board of Institutional Ministry (USA) has now become the Office of Institutional Ministry, international, and will attempt to coordinate our institutional ministries from a global perspective.

For the first time, the UFMCC has an international office located outside the United States! Our Office of the Board of World Church Extension, whose new executive secretary is Rev. Elder Jean White, is located in London, England. Our newest addition to the Board of World Church Extension is the Church Extension area of the Hispanic Americas, whose Coordinator is the Rev. Jose Mojica. Rev. Mojica will be visiting potential MCC groups in Sao Paulo, Brazil, and in Columbia during January and February of 1980.

One of the most significant actions of General Conference IX was to approve the establishment of a Special Elders' Taskforce on Inclusive Language, chaired by Rev. Brent Hawkes of MCC-Toronto, which has the awesome responsibility of creating a definition of and guidelines for usage of inclusive language in our Statement of Faith and in the worship and life of MCC congregations. These initial proposals will be circulated to all MCC congregations in 1980 for final action at General Conference X in 1981. By-laws proposals 1 through 8 dealing with language change were referred to this Taskforce.

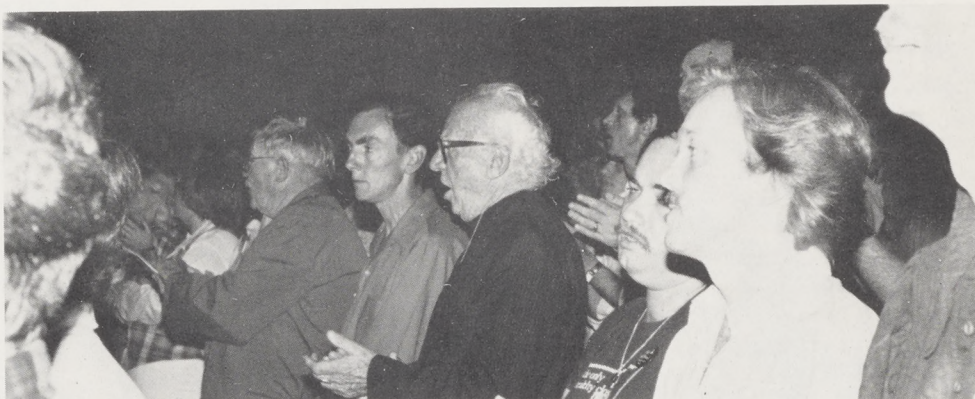
The Committee on Lay Concerns is now called the Commission on the Laity, and it has agreed to co-sponsor the Excel program with Samaritan Theological Institute. In addition, the Commission is encouraging the instituting of regional conferences between General Conferences.

The Elders' 10 year plan also includes the establishment of a Taskforce on Media Ministry, now led by Mr. Bob Johnson of MCC Washington, D.C. Its aim is the development of a fulltime radio ministry for UFMCC in the 1980's and, possibly the utilization of television ministry, as well. Rev Perry will be traveling to several major cities in the US in 1980 to begin a fundraising and promotional campaign for the work of the UFMCC. These events will be major opportunities for education and evangelism for our Fellowship, and for the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Resolution XII, passed by the General Conference, mandated that the Board of Elders appoint a Race Relations Director for the UFMCC, whose primary function will be to develop resources in the area of race relations for the people of the

UFMCC. The Conference also passed resolutions supporting the U.S. National Gay Civil Rights Bill, H.R. 2074; the U.S. Equal Rights Amendment; the District of Columbia Voting Rights Amendment; the Third World Conference held October 12th and 13th in Washington, D.C.; and the March on Washington October 14th, 1979.

There have also been some post-General Conference changes at the Fellowship headquarters in Los Angeles. The Elders are searching for a full-time Office Manager for the UFMCC Offices. I am temporarily functioning both as Clerk of the Board of Elders and temporary office manager. We expect to have an Office manager by Nov. 1st. Our staff presently includes Ms Jean Gralley, Mr. Phil Gallnitz, Mr. Dan Doughty, and Mr. Gerry Olson. Mr. Herb Shannon continues as our Fellowship accountant, and Rev. Pepper Shields is now the full-



Above: Conference host pastor and newly-elected Elder, the Rev. Jeri Ann Harvey; Left and below: worship services at MCC Los Angeles.

time Registrar at S.T.I., assisting the Dean, Rev. Jeff Pulling. The Office of Institutional Ministry is directed by Rev. Bob Arthur, assisted by Mr. Bruce Hughes. Mr. Frank Zerilli continues in his capacity as executive secretary of the Fellowship Offices.

At our October meeting, the Board of Elders will be meeting in Washington, D.C., after we have participated in the March. Among many other things, we will be discussing the future relationship of In Unity and the Gay Christian, having already reaffirmed our commitment to publish both magazines. Presently, Ms Jean Gralley is the interim editor of In Unity. We are accepting applications for the permanent position of editor.

The changes of General Conference IX reflect our growth, structurally and spiritually. We, the people of the UFMCC, are not a stagnant people. We are a people on the move; and it will take a commitment from all of us in this Fellowship to implement the dreams and goals of General Conference IX!

Marshall Williams

